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NAVAL POSTGRADUATE SCHOOL

Monterey, California



THESIS

CHECHNYA AND RUSSIA:
CONFLICT AND SELF-DETERMINATION

by

Brett A. Garvie

December 2002

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CHECHNYA AND RUSSIA: CONFLICT AND SELF-DETERMINATION

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Submitted in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of

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from the

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ABSTRACT

The current Russo-Chechen conflict illustrates the persistent tension between the principles of national self-determination and territorial integrity. Russia and Chechnya remain engaged in a centuries-old struggle with no foreseeable end. Many Chechens assert that they are continuing the struggle to break free of Russian oppression which began over two centuries ago. Indeed, Chechens have compared their struggle for national self-determination to that of the United States in 1776. In contrast, Russians argue that they have the right to protect and preserve their country's territorial integrity. In an effort to gain support from foreign observers, Russia has portrayed its struggle in Chechnya as part of the fight against international terrorism. Reaching an acceptable political solution would require compromises regarding the fundamental principles as well as the security and economic interests at stake.

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I. INTRODUCTION

This thesis examines Chechnya's campaign for independence from Russian rule and Russia's efforts to defeat this campaign. In presenting their case to foreign audiences, Russian leaders have defended their action in Chechnya as a fight against "a common foe, the common foe being international terrorism."¹ In contrast, spokesmen for Chechnya have maintained that it is engaged in a struggle for national independence. This thesis explores the conflict in Chechnya from both perspectives in an attempt to clarify the complex nature of the conflict and to reach informed judgments as to the main factors that may determine its outcome.

The Russians have presented their operations in Chechnya as a legitimate struggle against international terrorism. The Putin government, in an attempt to gain the support of the West for its campaign in Chechnya, has sought to "portray its actions as little different from Western anti-terrorist operations."² This thesis examines the historical background of Russia's experiences with terrorism, from the end of the nineteenth century to the present, and clarifies why Russians have chosen to present their actions in Chechnya as a response to terrorism.

From the perspective of many Chechens, they are engaged in a legitimate struggle for independence from

¹ Russian President Vladimir Putin quoted in *Washington Post* (Washington), 13 September 2001. Available Online at <http://www.washingtonpost.com/ac2/wp-dyn/A21535-2001Sep12?language=printer>

² Gail W. Lapidus, "Putin's War on Terrorism: Lessons From Chechnya," *Post Soviet Affairs* 18 (January-March 2002): 44.

Russian rule. This thesis explores Chechnya's struggle for independence beginning with the first Russian attempts to conquer Chechen lands in the late eighteenth century. "For the entire period from 1785 to the present in the Eastern Caucasus has been essentially one long struggle by the Chechens against Russian domination, interspersed with unstable truces and periods of sullen and unwilling submission."³ While the Russian government has frequently presented its interpretation of the conflict, it is important to gain a better understanding of Chechen perspectives.

Finally, this thesis provides an analysis of prospects for Chechen independence and other possible outcomes that might lead to a resolution of the conflict. For the Chechens to gain independence they would require significant support from foreign governments, an erosion (or collapse) of prevailing foreign perceptions of the legitimacy of Russian rule, the development of their own military power and political cohesion, and/or the exhaustion of the Russian state's colonizing power or a loss of public support in Russia for continuing repressive measures. From Moscow's perspective, Chechen independence and Russian interests in the region (including security and economic interests) are at odds.

Russia's attempts to impose military solutions to its problems in Chechnya appear to be failing in that a significant number of Chechens have remained defiant and have continued their efforts to attain national

³ Anatol Lieven, *Chechnya: Tombstone of Russian Power* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1998), 304.

independence. The antagonists base their policies on conflicting international principles, territorial integrity in the case of the Russians, and self-determination in the case of the Chechens. The challenges involved in resolving the conflict are clearly complex. An analysis of the conflict from the perspectives of both the Russians and the Chechens may contribute to an understanding of the conflict's dynamics and potential outcome.

This thesis is based on primary sources such as statements by Russian and Chechen officials, and on secondary sources such as journalist accounts of the conflict and scholarly studies. It provides a qualitative analysis based on a review of the historical development of these issues. This thesis is organized as follows:

Chapter II examines Russian experiences with terrorism from the end of the nineteenth century to the present. This review is intended to clarify why Russia has called all Chechen efforts to achieve national self-determination "terrorism," whether the acts in question involve non-violent political demonstrations, conventional military operations, or actions that meet generally accepted definitions of "terrorism," such as the hostage-taking in a Moscow theater in October 2002.

Chapter III explores the Chechen campaign for self-determination. The review includes the origins of Russian rule, the behavior of the Soviet government toward the Chechens, and current Chechen perspectives in an attempt to gain a better understanding of why the Chechens continue to resist Moscow's rule and struggle for independence despite

the brutal repression of their efforts by the Russian government.

Chapter IV offers an analysis of prospects for Chechen independence. It reviews issues preventing reconciliation and conflict-termination. It includes an assessment of the conditions required for Chechnya to gain independence. It also discusses the concepts of territorial integrity and self-determination as they apply to the Russo-Chechen conflict.

Chapter V summarizes conclusions and discusses the future of the Russo-Chechen conflict and the prospects for a political solution. If full national independence cannot be obtained, the Chechens may choose to accept a less ambitious form of self-determination, at least on a temporary and provisional basis.

II. RUSSIA'S CAMPAIGN AGAINST CHECHEN INDEPENDENCE

In the ongoing campaign to prevent Chechen independence Russia has thus far been able to block effective Chechen secession, but it has been unable to fully suppress the Chechen resistance movement. Throughout the conflict, Russia has, at times, been chastised by foreign governments, including the United States, for the methods it has used to suppress the Chechen independence movement. Foreign governments and observers have accused Moscow of human rights violations. In May 2002 United States Secretary of State Colin Powell said in testimony before Congress, "We have not forgotten about Russian abuses of human rights. We raise Chechnya at every opportunity."⁴ In presenting their case to foreign audiences, Russian leaders have defended their action in Chechnya as a fight against international terrorism.

This chapter examines Russian experiences with terrorism from the end of the nineteenth century to the present. This review is intended to clarify why Russia has chosen to call all Chechen efforts to achieve national self-determination "terrorism," whether the acts in question involve non-violent political demonstrations, conventional military operations, or actions that meet generally accepted definitions of "terrorism."

⁴ United States Secretary of State, Colin Powell quoted in Steven Pifer, Statement before the Commission on Security and Cooperation in Europe entitled U.S. Policy on Chechnya (Washington, 9 May 2002), paragraph 9-10. Available at <http://www.state.gov/p/eur/rls/rm/2002/10034pf.htm>.

A. HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

Terrorism in Russia is not a new phenomenon. Russians have struggled with terrorism and its definition since at least the late nineteenth century. In November 1917 the Bolsheviks used tactics including terrorism to overthrow the democratic Provisional Government that had taken power after the abdication of Tsar Nicholas II. Revolution (including terrorism) was at the heart of the Marxist-Leninist ideology to which the Soviet Union's leaders professed allegiance.

After the Soviet Union fell, Russia began to embrace Western definitions of terrorism. This included discounting armed struggle and revolution as justifications for terrorism. The mid-1990s brought Russia increased levels of terrorism, mostly resulting from the conflict in Chechnya. This conflict intensified owing to various factors, including the brutality of Russian tactics and the contributions of militant Muslim factions abroad. As the Russian campaign in Chechnya became more brutal, the Chechen fighters lost ground. In an attempt to halt, or at least delay, Russia's military momentum, the Chechens shifted their tactics. Anatol Lieven, who covered the war as a journalist, gives this account:

When I visited Serzhen Yurt and Vedeno (along with Sebastian Smith of AFP) in that month [May 1995], we saw considerable evidence that Chechen fortunes were at a low ebb, probably their lowest ebb of the entire war. Ammunition was very short, many of the men were extremely tired and in some cases moral had begun to crack. Basayev admitted later that the Chechens had been close to defeat, and said that as a result he had had unwillingly to adopt the tactic of raids into Russia and the

taking of civilian hostages.⁵

Faced with rising levels of terrorism, Russia has made many attempts to stem the tide of terror, and it has experienced both success and at times drastic failure.

1. Terrorism Defined

Terrorism is typically employed by the "underdog" based on the view that it is his weapon of last resort and/or that it offers the greatest promise of results in the given circumstances. Some modern terrorists apparently believe that they have no choice but to employ this strategy in order to defeat the superior forces they face. These forces may consist of a military force, the state, or an international order that is not to their satisfaction (e.g., the opposition of al-Qaeda terrorists to the secular and democratic societies of the West). Viewed in this way, terrorism has been and will continue to be rationalized by terrorists as an appropriate response to superior force.⁶

Terrorism has been an effective tool for the weak because it allows them to maximize their limited resources by seeking to intimidate and test the determination of a much stronger adversary.⁷ The success of terrorism can generally be attributed, not only to the fear generated by the threat or act of violence, but also to the heavy emphasis placed on the use of violence as a form of psychological warfare. As Michael McEwen notes,

⁵ Anatol Lieven, *Chechnya: Tombstone of Russian Power* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1998), 123.

⁶ Stephen Sloan, "Terrorism and Asymmetry," in Lloyd J. Matthews, ed., *Challenging the United States Symmetrically and Asymmetrically: Can America be Defeated?* (Carlisle Barracks, Penn: U.S. Army War College Strategic Studies Institute, 1998), 175.

⁷ Ibid., 177.

Terrorism is a form of psychological operations (PSYOP)... Many other characteristics of terrorism are argued by the drafters of competing definitions, but virtually all include words to the effect that acts of terrorism are directed at a target audience and not just the immediate victim. Without this provision, terrorism would be indistinguishable from other acts of violence.⁸

Owing to its psychological impact, terrorism has been a proven form of communication for separatist groups trying to get their message across to a particular audience.

The impact of terrorism on the psyche and its effectiveness, at least in some circumstances, as a tool for the weak are quite clear. What is not clear, or agreed upon among scholars, is how to define terrorism. Terrorism by nature is difficult to define. Acts of terrorism evoke emotional responses in the victims (those hurt by the violence and those affected by the fear) as well as in the perpetrators of the violence. The number of definitions offered is nearly endless. Even within the United States government, agreement on a definition does not exist.⁹ Listed below are examples of different definitions within the U.S. government:

- The unlawful use of force or violence against persons or property to intimidate or coerce a government, the civilian population, or any segment thereof, in the furtherance of political or social objectives (Federal Bureau of Investigation).¹⁰

⁸ Michael T. McEwen, "Psychological Operations Against Terrorism: The Unused Weapon," *Military Review*, January 1986.

⁹ David J. Whittaker, ed., *The Terrorism Reader* (New York: Routledge, 2001), 3.

¹⁰ As quoted in "Definitions," The Terrorism Research Center. Available at <http://www.terrorism.com/terrorism/def.shtml>

- The calculated use of violence or the threat of violence to inculcate fear; intended to coerce or to intimidate governments or societies in the pursuit of goals that are generally political, religious, or ideological (Department of Defense).¹¹
- Premeditated, politically motivated violence perpetrated against noncombatant targets by sub-national groups or clandestine agents, usually intended to influence an audience (State Department).¹²

With so many definitions of terrorism in circulation, the task of deciding which acts should be considered terrorism can be difficult. Moreover, it is important to remember that terrorism is not senseless violence (in the terrorist's eyes at least) against arbitrarily selected victims. Terrorism has purposes beyond its immediate destructive effects and instilling fear in those that witness the attack. Whatever the purposes motivating terrorists, they commit the acts of terrorism to achieve specific goals (e.g., to cause general terror, to get demands answered, and to gain attention).¹³

The primary goal of all terrorists is to cause terror among the population. They gain a substantial advantage if they can instill public fear and demoralize a society. With

¹¹ United States Army Field Manual 100-20, *Stability and Support Operations*, "Chapter 8: Combating Terrorism" as excerpted in "The Basics: Combating Terrorism," The Terrorism Research Center. Available at <http://www.terrorism.com/terrorism/basics.shtml>

¹² Definition chosen by the United States State Department for its annual report *Patterns of Global Terrorism* from Title 22 of the United States Code, Section 2656f(d). Available at <http://www.state.gov/s/ct/rls/pgtrpt/2001/html/10220.htm>

¹³ Alex P. Schmid, *Political Terrorism: A Research Guide to Concepts, Theories, Data Bases, and Literature* (Amsterdam: North-Holland Publishing Company, 1984), 97-99.

the public anxious about when and where the next attack will take place, the government is under pressure to act. As Frank Cilluffo, Deputy Director of the Global Organized Crime Project at the Center for Strategic International Studies, has pointed out,

At the heart of all terrorism is the intention to erode trust and undermine confidence in a government, its institutions, its elected officials, leaders, its policies in a given region; and also to show the population—hey, you cannot stop us—no matter what steps you take, you cannot stop us.¹⁴

Moreover, the loss of civil liberties would mean, in Cilluffo's view, "the terrorist wins."¹⁵

The second possible goal of terrorists is to coerce someone into meeting their demands. This usually requires a hijacking or kidnapping. Terrorists use such tactics to have a wide range of demands met, such as the release of prisoners or associates and the extortion of money to fund further operations and buy weapons.

The third possible goal is to gain attention. Attacks may draw attention to a particular issue or cause that the terrorists feel needs to be addressed. An ancillary purpose behind this goal is to win recruits and support for the organization. The terrorists prove to sympathizers that their organization is strong; and they attempt to whip their supporters into an emotional fervor in hopes of making their organization more attractive to prospective recruits.

¹⁴ Frank Cilluffo, responding to questions posed by TV journalists at stations across Russia, 27 November 1999, transcript found at <http://usinfo.state.gov/topical/pol/terror/99092706.htm>.

¹⁵ Ibid.

The complexity of defining terrorism was recently highlighted by a prominent American analyst's proposed definition "as the deliberate targeting of civilians, and not his ideology or religion."¹⁶ Pierre Hassner, a distinguished French authority on international relations has pointed out that "if the distinguishing criterion is the death or suffering inflicted on the civilian population, it should be applied to strategic bombing (as in...Russia's bombing of Chechnya...), and to reprisals against towns and villages, and to most embargoes."¹⁷

2. Changing Attitudes During the Soviet Era

During the period prior to the 1917 Bolshevik Revolution, the use of terrorism (as defined above) as a means to achieve political goals, however infrequent, did exist in Russia.¹⁸ The early Soviet attitude toward terrorism, based on Marxist-Leninist theory, was "critical of the individual use of terrorism."¹⁹ During the years of Soviet rule, terrorism as a way to achieve goals received little or no official public support from the Soviet government, but it was tolerated to a certain degree if the act of violence was "directed toward precisely defined targets at a precisely defined time and possibly serving as

¹⁶ Harvey Sicherman, "Finding a Foreign Policy," *Orbis*, Spring 2002, 219-220. As cited in Pierre Hassner, "The United States: The Empire of Force or the Force of Empire?," (Paris: Institute for Security Studies, European Union, September 2002), 40.

¹⁷ Hassner, 41.

¹⁸ Anna Geifman, *Thou Shalt Kill: Revolutionary Terrorism in Russia, 1894-1917* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993), 3.

¹⁹ Walter Laqueur, foreword to *Gorbachev's "New Thinking" on Terrorism*, by Galia Golan (New York: Praeger Publishers), vii.

a trigger for, or accompanying, the general armed uprising."²⁰

As Russia entered the twentieth century, terrorism was a common occurrence. "Marx, Engels, and Lenin did not "reject terrorism as a matter of moral principle; in certain conditions they thought it might work."²¹ However, the Bolsheviks held that individual terrorism had no place in revolution because they intended to lead revolutions ostensibly carried out by the masses. By the standards stated above, the actions conducted during the Bolshevik revolution (including kidnapping, sabotage, and assassinations), committed with the purpose of creating general chaos within the democratically oriented Provisional Government regime with the intent of toppling it, can be classified as terrorism. Furthermore, at Stalin's direction, the Soviet government took steps of mass terrorism—for example, the "terror famine" of 1932-33 caused by Stalin and his regime to eliminate the kulaks as a class.²² It is also worth recalling that Robert Conquest entitled his study of Stalin's "purges" (in fact killings) of millions of Soviet citizens *The Great Terror*.²³ The general terror and fear instilled in the population through iron-fisted tactics leave the impression that terrorism was an instrument of state policy during the early Soviet era, at least from Lenin through Stalin (1917-1953).

²⁰ William Pomeroy, ed., *Guerrilla Warfare and Marxism* (London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1969), 75-121 as cited in Golan, 12.

²¹ Laqueur, vii.

²² Martin E. Malia, *The Soviet Tragedy: A History of Socialism in Russia, 1917-1991* (New York: The Free Press, 1994), 190-198.

²³ Robert Conquest, *The Great Terror* (New York: Macmillan, 1968).

During the Brezhnev era (1964-1982), official Soviet policy did not allow for support of "groups using terrorism *exclusively*."²⁴ However, the argument becomes clouded when we attempt to distinguish between terrorism and armed struggle. Although some experts hold that there is no firm evidence to prove direct involvement (through control and direction), the USSR's policy during the Brezhnev era did lend support to terrorism by providing arms and training to groups known to use terrorist tactics.²⁵

The support for terrorism by the Soviet Union was evident when Soviet-made weapons began to show up in the hands of organizations such as the Palestinian Liberation Organization. As Galia Golan notes, "the Soviet Union clearly—and in some cases openly—has provided arms to groups that practice terrorism."²⁶

The second aspect of Soviet support for terrorism was training. The training took place in the Soviet Union, Soviet-bloc countries, and in various other countries. The KGB and elements of the Soviet Army's intelligence branch conducted the training with very little effort to cover it up.²⁷ Many of the groups receiving the training were identified in the West as terrorist movements; however, they were identified by the Soviets as revolutionaries or anti-colonial movements.²⁸

²⁴ Golan, 31; emphasis in the original.

²⁵ Golan cites Western studies that provide evidence of support for terrorism by the Soviet Union in the form of arms and training, but she discounts the idea of "Soviet domination, control, and direction of terrorism." See Golan, 19.

²⁶ Ibid., 19

²⁷ Ibid., 21.

²⁸ Ibid.

The Soviet government refused to reject support for a group based solely on the methods it employed. However, the Soviet leadership's characterization of the methods varied at times. "The very same methods characterized as 'resistance' or 'guerrilla warfare' during periods of support were classified as 'terrorism' during periods of nonsupport."²⁹ Clearly, there was Soviet state support for terrorism (official or not) during the Brezhnev era.

Support for terrorism continued in the Soviet Union until Mikhail Gorbachev came to power. The first signs that attitudes were changing came in a "subtle addition to the definition of terrorism in the 1986 edition of the *Soviet Military Dictionary*...[that] added 'new forms' of terrorism...that could no longer be attributed solely to regimes or oppressors acting against oppressed populations."³⁰ The new view was a shift from the former viewpoint that justified armed struggle (including terrorism) when it was a part of national liberation movements. As Gorbachev said,

Crises and conflicts are also fertile ground for international terrorism. Undeclared wars, the export of counterrevolution in all its forms, political assassinations, hostage taking, aircraft hi-jackings, explosions in streets, airports, or railway stations--this is the loathsome face of terrorism, which those inspiring it try to disguise with various kinds of cynical fabrications.³¹

²⁹ Ibid., 22.

³⁰ Ibid., 33.

³¹ Mikhail Gorbachev, *Pravda*, February 26, 1986. Quoted in Galia Golan, *Gorbachev's "New Thinking" on Terrorism* (New York: Praeger, 1989), 34.

At this point, some Soviet leaders began to recognize terrorism as an international problem that would require worldwide cooperation, including Soviet cooperation with the West. Recognition of terrorism as an international problem became important to Russia after the dissolution of the Soviet Union in 1991 led to the independence of fifteen successor states, including Russia. In particular, this recognition became important to Moscow in dealing with the Chechen independence movement.

B. 1994-1996

During the years from 1991 to 1994, Russia was preoccupied with political and economic instabilities and took little action to suppress the independence movement in Chechnya. In 1994 a series of four bus hijackings prompted the Yeltsin government to renew its pressure on the Chechen independence movement in an attempt to regain control of the situation in Chechnya.³² The renewed pressure and subsequent refusal by the Chechen leaders to capitulate led to military intervention by Russia in December 1994.³³

During the first Russo-Chechen war (1994-1996), Chechen fighters faced an overwhelming Russian force. Unable to oppose the Russian forces through direct engagements the Chechens resorted to acts of terrorism in order to regain the advantage in the war.

The first such incident took place in a June 1995 raid in the town of Budennovsk led by Chechen field Commander Shamil Basayev.³⁴ The raid, as described below by Anatol

³² Lieven, 86.

³³ The decision by Moscow for military intervention was much more complex than this. For a more detailed explanation see Lieven, 84-93.

³⁴ Ibid., 124.

Lieven, became the turning point for Chechen tactics in the campaign for independence:

After storming the police station and briefly holding the town hall, they [Basayev's forces] rounded up several hundred hostages and confined them in the hospital, threatening to kill them if the Russian army did not withdraw from Chechnya. He did in fact reportedly execute several wounded Russian soldiers from the hospital, and some ninety-one people were killed in the Chechen attack, including policemen and local civilians.³⁵

The siege ended with Basayev successfully negotiating "an agreement involving an immediate ceasefire by Russian troops, the reopening of negotiations, and transport and a guarantee of safe passage for Basayev and his men to return to separatist-held areas of Chechnya."³⁶

The ceasefire resulted in only a few months of relative peace, marked by minor clashes between Russian and Chechen forces. It ended on 9 October 1995, when Russia announced that it was suspending the agreement.³⁷ Russia withdrew from the agreement after a car bomb in Grozny critically wounded a Russian general assigned there.³⁸ With Russia's withdrawal from the ceasefire and the possibility of renewed military operations in Chechnya, Basayev promptly countered with threats of future terrorist action against Russian non-combatants. In an interview on 21 October 1995, Basayev said:

If war operations begin again, if the Russian side uses force to put pressure on Chechnya, I

³⁵ Ibid.

³⁶ Ibid.

³⁷ Ibid., 136.

³⁸ Ibid.

have said unambiguously and I repeat once again: we do not intend to fight longer on our own territory.... I have radioactive material. This is a good weapon. I will spray it anywhere in the centre of Moscow and to the glory of God I will turn that city into an eternal desert.... If the Russians lengthen this war, we will have to resort to what I have been speaking of.³⁹

In a demonstration to prove his capability to carry out terrorism in Moscow, "Basayev's men planted a package of low-level radioactive cesium in a Moscow park, and then told Russian journalists where to find it."⁴⁰

The use of terrorist tactics by Chechen separatists continued in January 1996 after a failed attack on a Russian military airfield outside the town of Kizlyar, Daghestan.⁴¹ After their failure at the airport, the separatists, led by Salman Raduyev, a relative of President Dudayev, "entered the town and, imitating Basayev, took some 2,000 hostages and herded them into a local hospital."⁴² On the same day, the separatists left the town taking with them 160 hostages en route to the village of Pervomaiskoye near the Chechen border.⁴³ When the Chechen separatists along with the hostages neared Pervomaiskoye, they were attacked by Russian troops.⁴⁴ "Extraordinarily, the Chechens were able to leave the convoy and take refuge

³⁹ "Chechen Leader Basayev's Threat to Turn Moscow Into Desert," (British Broadcasting Corporation), 23 October 1995. Available from Lexis-Nexis [Online].

⁴⁰ Michael Specter, "Russians Assert Radioactive Box Found in Park Posed No Danger," *New York Times*, 25 November 1995. As cited in Lieven, 137.

⁴¹ Lieven, 137.

⁴² Ibid.

⁴³ Ibid., 138.

⁴⁴ Ibid.

in the village, adding some of its inhabitants to the hostages."⁴⁵ Six days later,

the Russian forces launched a full-scale attack on Pervomaiskoye, including artillery and helicopter gunships, and without any regard for the safety of the hostages, between thirteen and eighteen of whom were killed in the fighting along with twenty-six Russian soldiers.⁴⁶

Raduyev and his force managed to hold out for three days and then escaped to Chechnya.⁴⁷

Chechen President Dzhokhar Dudayev's death in April 1996 and subsequent replacement by Vice-President Zelimkhan Yandarbuyev ultimately led to a short peace in Chechnya and the Khasavyurt accord in August of that year.⁴⁸ Anatol Lieven explains how this was a fortunate turn of events in the conflict:

Hard-hearted though it may seem to say it, Dudayev's death did contribute to the later peace in Chechnya. On past form, it is very difficult to see him either being able to negotiate successfully with Lebed in August, or allowing Mashkadov to do so—let alone agreeing to stand in a free election after the peace.⁴⁹

The Khasavyurt accord calling for a formal end of hostilities between the antagonists should have brought a decrease in terrorist attacks. Whether this was in fact the

⁴⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁸ The Khasavyurt is the Russian-Chechen Truce Agreement signed by both sides on 25 August 1996. An unofficially translated english text version is available in Diane Curran, Fiona Hill, and Elena Kostritsyna, *The Search for Peace in Chechnya: A Sourcebook 1994-1996* (Cambridge: Harvard University, March 1997), 208.

⁴⁹ Lieven, 140.

case is unclear. According to the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, at the end of 1997 71 people were in the custody of kidnappers.⁵⁰ In the view of the United States State Department, "Most of these involved ransom demands, although political motives cannot be excluded."⁵¹ To further exacerbate the situation, in 1998 the Chechens, whom the Russians called "terrorists," began receiving support (equipment and training) from "Mujahidin with extensive links to Middle Eastern and Southwest Asian terrorists."⁵² However, in 1998 the number of attacks decreased by 60 percent and consisted mostly of kidnappings "for financial gain" with one "politically motivated contract killing" and a bomb explosion.⁵³ As of 1999, the kidnappings were unsolved and still being investigated. However, the assassination and the bomb attack were attributed to "domestic antagonists"—that is, fighting among the Chechens instead of Chechen attacks on Russians.⁵⁴

C. 1999 TO THE PRESENT

In 1999, the relative decrease in terrorist activity experienced in 1998 came to an abrupt end. Russian cities, including Moscow and Volgodonsk, suffered a series of devastating bomb attacks that left 279 dead and over 800

⁵⁰ Department of State. Office of the Coordinator for Counterterrorism. 1998. *1997 Patterns of Global Terrorism: Eurasian Overview*, 1. Available at <http://www.state.gov/www/global/terrorism/1997Report/eurasia.html>

⁵¹ Ibid.

⁵² Department of State. Office of the Coordinator for Counterterrorism. 1999. *1998 Patterns of Global Terrorism: Eurasian Overview*, 1. Available at <http://www.state.gov/www/global/terrorism/1998Report/eurasia.html>

⁵³ Ibid.

⁵⁴ Ibid.

injured.⁵⁵ Russian authorities blamed the attacks on Chechen insurgents. However, no evidence was ever produced conclusively linking the Chechens to the attacks.⁵⁶ In the wake of the apartment bombings and violence in Daghestan that was blamed on the Chechens, the Russian military was sent into Chechnya to eliminate the "terrorist" elements.⁵⁷

Although 2000 was a comparatively quiet year for terrorist attacks in Russia, one attack in Moscow was blamed on Chechen rebels. On 8 August 2000, an explosion in Moscow killed eight people and injured about 50 "during rush hour in one of [Moscow's] busiest subways, in Pushkin Square."⁵⁸

In 2001, Russia experienced a large increase in terrorist acts connected to the instability and ongoing insurgency in Chechnya. The first incident of the year involved the kidnapping of a United States aid worker on 9 January.⁵⁹ Responsibility for the kidnapping was accepted by Shamil Basayev, who "apologized, saying it was a

⁵⁵ Department of State. Office of the Coordinator for Counterterrorism. 2000. *1999 Patterns of Global Terrorism: Eurasian Overview*, 1-2. Available at <http://www.state.gov/www/global/terrorism/1999report/eurasia.html>

⁵⁶ Ibid. See also Lapidus, 43. For alternative theories, by Boris Kagarlitsky and financier George Soros (among others), blaming Russian military intelligence for the explosions, see Peter Reddaway and Dmitri Glinski, *The Tragedy of Russia's Reforms: Market Bolshevism Against Democracy* (Washington: United States Institute for Peace Press, 2001), chapter 9, p. 615, an extended excerpt of which is available at <http://www.cdi.org/russia/johnson/5067.html>

⁵⁷ Ibid.

⁵⁸ "Blast Rocks Moscow Subway," (British Broadcasting Corporation), 8 August 2000. Available at <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/low/world/europe/871376.stm>

⁵⁹ Department of State. Office of the Coordinator for Counterterrorism. 2002. *2001 Patterns of Global Terrorism: Eurasian Overview*, 1-2. Available at <http://www.state.gov/s/ct/rls/pgtrpt/2001/html/10239.htm>

misunderstanding," and released the hostage on 6 February.⁶⁰ On 15 March, a Russian charter flight departing Turkey for Moscow was hijacked by "three Chechen men armed with knives...demanding that the pilots divert the plane to an Islamic country."⁶¹ After landing in Saudi Arabia, the plane was stormed by Saudi special forces who arrested two of the hijackers and killed the third. One of the plane's crewmembers and a passenger also perished.⁶² The attacks continued on 24 March as three car bombs killed at least 20 people in the city of Stavropol.⁶³

The year 2002 brought Russia its deadliest incident since the apartment bombings in 1999. In an episode resembling the sieges in Budennovsk (1995) and Kizlyar (1996), a group of Chechen separatists stormed a theater in Moscow on 23 October, taking more than 700 hostages.⁶⁴ Their demands for withdrawal of Russian troops from Chechnya fell on deaf ears as Ahmed Kadirov, the Russian-appointed head of the Chechen administration, ridiculed the hostage-takers' actions, commenting that "one can't resolve problems by starting the war in another area."⁶⁵

Although the shift in tactics toward using terrorism has given the Chechens a means to continue resisting in the face of overwhelming Russian military forces, the use of terrorism is generally viewed by the greater part of

⁶⁰ Ibid.

⁶¹ Ibid.

⁶² Ibid.

⁶³ Ibid.

⁶⁴ "Hostage Situation Takes Center Stage at Moscow Theater," (Cable News Network), 24 October 2002. Available at <http://www.cnn.com/2002/fyi/news/10/24/russia.seige>

⁶⁵ Ibid.

international society as unacceptable. This is especially true in the post-11 September environment. The continued attacks on civilians by Chechens have hurt their cause. In particular, the Chechens' use of terrorism has made it easier for Russia to justify its decision to use military force in Chechnya.

D. RUSSIAN STRATEGY IN CHECHNYA

The Russian public diplomacy strategy in its portrayal of the Russo-Chechen conflict has undergone a marked shift from the first (1994-1996) to the second (1999 to the present) phase of combat. The difference in how the Russians have portrayed the two conflicts is at least partially due to lessons learned from the first conflict about public presentation policy.

Russia's decision to intervene in Chechnya in 1994, although prompted partially by acts of violence and lawlessness in the region, was not portrayed as an anti-terrorist operation. Instead, the purpose of the intervention was for the "restoration of constitutional legality and law and order... [and] to disarm and liquidate military units."⁶⁶ Russia's leaders did not institute a public diplomacy campaign to justify their actions because they believed that the intervention would be short and without significant Chechen resistance. Furthermore, the Russians were not worried about foreign perceptions because they believed that the "international community would treat the use of force in Chechnya as a strictly domestic Russian

⁶⁶ President of the Russian Federation Boris Yeltsin, *Decree Of the President of the Russian Federation: On the Measures to Restore Constitutional Legality and Law and Order to the Territory of the Chechen Republic* (30 November 1994), in Curran, Hill, and Kostitsyna, 148.

affair."⁶⁷ Their assumptions about foreign observers remaining neutral were correct until the Chechens failed to give in. Civilian casualties began to mount due to Russia's air bombardment of civilian population centers, and this "outraged public opinion in Russia and in the West."⁶⁸

While preparing for their second violent intervention in Chechnya, the Russians applied lessons learned from the 1994-1996 Chechen conflict. In particular, they realized that they would face considerable resistance and that they would need to take steps to gain public acceptance of their decision to use force. To gain this public acceptance, Moscow defined its reason for intervention in more specific terms to make clear that the intervention was aimed at terrorists rather than the entire Chechen population. In an interview on 1 November 1999, Prime Minister Vladimir Putin explained that the goal of Russian troops in Chechnya was

to destroy the bases of terrorists and the conditions that could facilitate their revival. But the most important task is to win over the feelings of the population. It is impossible to defeat a people, it is impossible to force a people to its knees. As to the terrorists, they can and must be destroyed.⁶⁹

Throughout the conflict underway since 1999, the Russian government has maintained that it is conducting an anti-terrorist operation and protecting its territory from being "used as a launching pad for enemies of Russian

⁶⁷ Carlotta Gall and Thomas de Waal, *Chechnya: Calamity in the Caucasus* (New York: New York University Press, 1998), 158.

⁶⁸ Lieven, 107.

⁶⁹ Russian Prime Minister Vladimir Putin quoted in "Vladimir Putin's Interview to ORT Channel, November 1, 1999," (Russian Embassy: Ottawa, Ontario). Available at <http://www.magma.ca/~rusemb/Chechnya.htm>

statehood and sovereignty."⁷⁰ In discussing the situation he faces in Chechnya, President Putin told United States President George W. Bush to "Imagine that some armed people come from the south and want to take half of Texas. This is exactly what we're dealing with here."⁷¹ Putin made these comments to President Bush in June 2001. Three months later, President Putin's effort to justify the Russian struggle in Chechnya became easier as the world watched the terrorist attacks on the United States in horror.

The political consequences of the attacks of 11 September 2001 included a more favorable context for the Russian cause in Chechnya. After the attacks, Washington and other Western capitals were less inclined to criticize Russian behavior in Chechnya. The war on terrorism since the 11 September attacks has left Washington with little room to criticize Russian actions in Chechnya. Even though the Russian leaders have apparently gained support from Washington, or at least a measure of forbearance, for their action in Chechnya, Pierre Hassner, a prominent French foreign policy expert, has offered this warning:

The idea that, in the fight against terrorism, countries are recognised as either allies or adversaries, as all are obliged to make a radical choice, could lead to turning a blind eye to the infringement of human rights or collective oppression if these are justified in the name of

⁷⁰ Putin quoting his own remarks to President Bush in "Visitor Putin Takes Tea, No Advice on a Brief Trip to London April 17, Russia's New President Wooed Investors, Stood Firm on Chechnya," (Christian Science Monitor), 17 April 2000. Available from Pro Quest [Online]

⁷¹ Putin quoted in "Putin Says no Independence for Chechnya, Defends Hard Line Against Rebels," (Associated Press), 19 June 2001. Available from Lexis-Nexis [Online]

the fight against terrorism. The example of Russia in Chechnya is particularly instructive in this regard.⁷²

The 11 September attacks have led to extensive cooperation between Moscow and Washington. President Putin was forthcoming in support of U.S. operations by showing little resistance to United States use of bases in Central Asia. This action assisted the United States in mounting a successful campaign against the Taliban and al-Qaeda forces. The underlying implication is that the al-Qaeda forces that attacked America have also been providing support for the Chechen insurgents.

⁷² Hassner, 44-45.

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III. CHECHNYA'S CAMPAIGN FOR SELF-DETERMINATION

The purpose of this chapter is to explore the Russo-Chechen conflict from the perspective of the Chechen people. This examination of the historical context of their struggle for independence is important to understand the strength of their aspirations. The Chechens' current campaign for self-determination is merely the latest chapter in a struggle that began with early Russian conquests in the eighteenth century followed by Chechen resistance to Russian rule. Following their struggle against Russian dominance under the Tsars, the Chechen people endured even harsher treatment under Soviet rule. They faced uncertainty over their region's status as an Autonomous Republic of the Soviet Union and endured mass deportation to Central Asia under Stalin.

A. ORIGINS OF RUSSIAN RULE

1. Early Conquest

The conflict between Russia and Chechnya began in the eighteenth century when Peter the Great was pursuing expansion of his empire.⁷³ In his quest "to gain access to the warm-water ports of the Black sea, link up with the Christian kingdoms of Georgia and Armenia, and eventually open up trade routes to the British Empire and India,"⁷⁴ Peter the Great conquered the Chechen lands situated geographically between Russia and its goals. Throughout the remainder of the eighteenth century, the Russians with the help of the Cossacks built military forts and settled the

⁷³ Carlotta Gall and Thomas de Waal, *Chechnya: Calamity in the Caucasus* (New York: New York University Press, 1998) 37.

⁷⁴ Ibid.

Chechen lands along the River Terek, "consolidating their expansion into the new territory."⁷⁵

As the nineteenth century began, the northern Caucasus region was experiencing a period of restless peace continually interrupted by minor skirmishes between Russian forces and the Chechens.⁷⁶ The relative peace ended in 1816 with the appointment of General Alexei Yermolov as Commander-in-Chief of the Caucasus.⁷⁷ General Yermolov, a hero of the Napoleonic Wars known for his extremely brutal tactics, immediately commenced a campaign "aimed at ending raids by the Mountaineers into Russian territory, and bringing the khans and tribes of the region to a state of full submission."⁷⁸

Although Yermolov is generally credited with great success on the battlefield, he did not "complete the pacification of the Caucasus, and it may be argued that his methods won Russia more bitter enemies than reliable subjects."⁷⁹ After successfully putting down a full scale rebellion in Chechnya (1825-6), Yermolov left the Caucasus in 1827, beginning a period in which Chechens and other mountain tribes began to unite in opposition to further Russian military action.⁸⁰

⁷⁵ Ibid., 38. See also Robert Seely, *Russo-Chechen Conflict, 1800-2000: A Deadly Embrace* (London: Frank Cass Publishers, 2001), 22-23.

⁷⁶ Anatol Lieven, *Chechnya: Tombstone of Russian Power* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1998), 306.

⁷⁷ Gall and de Waal, 39.

⁷⁸ Lieven, 306.

⁷⁹ Hugh Seton-Watson, *The Russian Empire: 1801-1917* (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1967), 183.

⁸⁰ Seely, 32.

2. Chechen Resistance

Following the previous decade of brutal Russian conquest, the Chechens began a period of staunch resistance to the Russian empire's attempts to fully subjugate the region. Robert Seely describes the situation as Yermolov's replacement, Prince Ivan Paskevich, was about to embark on a new campaign in the Caucasus on the orders of Tsar Nicholas:

When the 1830 campaign began in March, the Russians found their enemy better prepared than in previous years. Spurred on by the knowledge that they would have either to accept Russian rule or fight, proselytized Chechens, Avars, and other mountain clans had agreed common cause in 1829 and elected a radical *mullah*, Mohammed, as the first *imam*. He proved a competent military leader and, in a series of military actions, harrying the Russians from 1830 onwards, began to experiment with the military tactics that other leaders, most notably Shamil, would later use against both the Russian armies and local clans who accepted Russia's stewardship.⁸¹

For the next thirty years, under the leadership of Shamil, the "mountain people's armed forces"⁸² conducted a successful campaign of resistance using the guerrilla tactics developed by Mohammed to inflict heavy casualties on the larger Russian forces.⁸³ During his thirty-year campaign, Shamil used his popularity and power not only to resist Russian conquest, but also to create a "mini-state with its own tax and legal system" among the Chechens.⁸⁴ In managing his "mini-state," Shamil maintained a standing and

⁸¹ Ibid., 39.

⁸² Ibid., 32.

⁸³ Seton-Watson, 292-293.

⁸⁴ Gall and de Waal, 48.

a reserve army, regulated prices for goods, and watched over the public and private lives of his citizenry.⁸⁵

In the late 1850s, Shamil's campaign to resist the Russians was in trouble. The Russians defeated the Turks and Kars in the Crimean War (1854-6), bringing all hope of Western and Ottoman help to an end. Furthermore, after thirty years of war, Shamil's followers, exhausted and lacking the will to continue resistance efforts, abandoned him.⁸⁶ In 1859, completely surrounded by Russian troops, Shamil surrendered. Although his surrender appeared to end the resistance of the Chechen people to Russian rule, Shamil's efforts were not in vain.

By the time of his surrender, Shamil was famous across Europe. Karl Marx in his polemical works attacking the Tsarist Empire called him a 'great democrat' and exhorted the oppressed peoples of Europe to emulate his courage. Historians have argued that by laying down the first proper kind of statehood in Chechnya and Dagestan, Shamil actually made it easier for the Russians to impose their authority, once they had conquered these countries; but he also established a precedent of self determination, which encouraged the mountain peoples to continue resisting.⁸⁷

B. CHECHNYA UNDER THE SOVIETS

Although the defeat and surrender of Shamil ended a period of large-scale military resistance, it did not completely extinguish the Chechen people's will to resist. As the twentieth century began, the Tsar found his empire threatened from within by the Bolsheviks and other

⁸⁵ Ibid.

⁸⁶ Lieven, 308.

⁸⁷ Gall and de Waal, 49-50. This point is also brought up in Lieven, 308-309.

revolutionary movements. The democratic Provisional Government that was established after the abdication of Tsar Nicholas II seemed to be a fortunate turn of events for the Chechens because the regime that had repressed them for over a century was no longer in power.

The Bolshevik seizure of power from the Provisional Government gave renewed hope for freedom to Chechens. The following statement, "signed by Lenin and Stalin, to 'All Muslims, Toilers of Russia and the East' on 3 December 1917" shows that Chechen hopes for freedom were founded in the promises articulated by the Bolsheviks.⁸⁸

Muslims of Russia! Tatars of the Volga and the Crimea! Kyrgyz and Sarts of Siberia and of Turkestan! Turks and Tatars of the Trans-Caucasus! Chechens and mountain people of the Caucasus! All you whose mosques and prayer houses used to be destroyed, and whose beliefs and customs were trodden under-foot by the Tsars and oppressors of Russia! From today, your beliefs and your customs and your national and cultural constitutions, are free and inviolate. Organize your national life freely and without hindrance. You are entitled to this... Comrades! Brothers! Let us march towards an honest and democratic peace. On our banners is inscribed the freedom of oppressed peoples.⁸⁹

This hope was soon crushed by the discovery that the Bolsheviks in fact intended to continue the conquest and subjugation started by the Russian empire. The next thirty years under the Soviet regime included uncertainty for the Chechens over the status of autonomy for their region and mass deportations by Stalin.

⁸⁸ Ibid., 51.

⁸⁹ Ibid., 52.

1. Chechen-Ingush Region: Status as an "Autonomous" Republic in the Soviet Union

The overthrow of the Tsarist regime and the professed support of the Bolsheviks for the freedom of the North Caucasus peoples prompted the Chechens and Daghestanis in May 1918 to "set up a North Caucasus Republic, recognized by the Central Powers."⁹⁰ (The Central Powers consisted of Austria-Hungary, Bulgaria, Germany, and the Ottoman Empire.) The recognition of the North Caucasus Republic by the Central Powers was short lived because the Bolsheviks soon began a campaign to re-assert colonial control over the region, as Paul Henze writes,

through classic divide-and-rule techniques. Peoples were allocated separate "autonomous" republics and regions, areas of mixed populations were shifted arbitrarily, and unrelated ethnic groups with few common interests were joined together so that each would serve to restrain tendencies toward self-assertion among others.⁹¹

The ambiguity over the status of the region continued as the Soviet government in 1921 again re-aligned the region by setting up the Soviet Mountain Republic to include Chechens, Ingush, Ossetes, Karachai, and Balkars, with the Daghestanis organized separately.⁹²

In 1924, the Soviet Mountain Republic was again broken up into separate autonomous regions. They remained organized this way until 1936 when the Chechen-Ingush region was upgraded to the status of an Autonomous Republic within the Russian Federation instead of being elevated to

⁹⁰ Lieven, 317.

⁹¹ Paul Henze, *Russia and the North Caucasus* (Santa Monica, CA: RAND, 1996), 4.

⁹² Lieven, 318.

the status of a full Union Republic.⁹³ The importance of this distinction would later play a role in Chechnya's struggle for self-determination. As Anatol Lieven explains,

Tragically, however, it [the Chechen-Ingush region] became an Autonomous Republic and was kept as part of the Russian Federation, rather than being given status as a full Union Republic like Azerbaijan and Georgia—something which would probably not have prevented Russian interference in Chechnya after 1991, but by avoiding the later threat from the Chechens to 'Russian territorial integrity' would almost certainly have avoided the invasion and full-scale war which began three years later.⁹⁴

The Chechens celebrated their new status and sent a delegation of women from the Chechen-Ingush Republic to Tblisi to thank Stalin's mother for the "fatherly" treatment of the Chechen-Ingush people.⁹⁵ The celebration by the Chechen people was premature. Stalin launched an NKVD operation in the region in July 1937 to suppress "bandit" operations, in which 14,000 Chechens and Ingush were rounded up and shot. This initiated a new era of Soviet tactics employed to control the region, mostly through deportations, which began in February 1944.⁹⁶ After the Chechens returned from more than a decade in exile in 1957, the Chechen-Ingush Autonomous Republic was re-established by the Soviet government.

⁹³ Ibid. This distinction is important because according to the 1936 Constitution of the USSR, Article 17, "To every Union Republic is reserved the right freely to secede from the U.S.S.R." Available at <http://www.departments.bucknell.edu/russian/const/36cons01.html>

⁹⁴ Ibid.

⁹⁵ Gall and De Wall, 55.

⁹⁶ Lieven, 318. See also Gall and de Waal, 55.

2. Deportations

A second factor contributing to the historical distrust of the Chechens toward Russians is the massive effort under the Soviet government to "liquidate" the Chechen and Ingush peoples through deportation. In February 1944, the deportations began in earnest. Nearly 400,000 Chechens were sent to different parts of the Soviet Union.⁹⁷

The deportations left deep mental scars in a new generation of Chechens and made them even more distrustful of the Russians. Although the Chechens had been praised for their contribution to the war effort, the Soviet government soon denounced the Chechens "as traitors and disloyal tools of the Nazi invaders to justify uprooting them from lands they had occupied for millennia."⁹⁸

The inhumane manner in which the deportations were conducted and the harsh conditions faced by the Chechens remain etched in their minds today. Evidence of this can be found in a first-hand account of the situation by Chechen journalist Murad Nashkoyev:

In my cattle-truck, half of us died during the journey. There was no toilet—we had to cut a hole in the floor, and that was also how we got rid of the corpses. I suppose we could have escaped that way, but the men did not want to leave their families. When we arrived in Kazakhstan, the ground was frozen hard, and we thought we would all die.⁹⁹

⁹⁷ Ibid., 319.

⁹⁸ Henze, *Islam in the North Caucasus: The Example of Chechnya* (Santa Monica CA: RAND, 1995), 20

⁹⁹ Nashkoyev quoted in Lieven, 317.

In November 1948, the Soviet government announced that the deportations, which included nearly the entire population of ethnic Chechens, were "permanent without right of return."¹⁰⁰ The deported Chechens remained in exile until Stalin's death in 1953 and the subsequent easing of restrictions on deportees. In his February 1956 "secret speech," Khrushchev denounced the policies of Stalin "which had condemned the Northern Caucasus clans" to exile and allowed the Chechens to return to their native lands.¹⁰¹

Upon their return to re-settle their native lands in 1957, the Chechen people found their villages either empty or occupied by Russians who had moved in after the deportations.¹⁰² The children among the deported Chechens, some of whom are still alive, continue to bear the scars inflicted by the brutality experienced during the period of deportations that would later be described by Khrushchev as "monstrous."¹⁰³

C. CHECHEN PERSPECTIVES

The mindset and determination of the Chechens to continue resisting Russian rule, even when faced with overwhelming odds, have been "tempered and hardened by the historical experiences of the past two hundred years."¹⁰⁴ This defiance carries over to the most recent conflicts involving Russia and Chechnya. Referring to the events surrounding the Chechen declaration of independence in the

¹⁰⁰ Gall and De Waal, 61.

¹⁰¹ Seely, 87.

¹⁰² Lieven, 322.

¹⁰³ Seely, 87.

¹⁰⁴ Lieven, 324.

autumn of 1991, Chechen historian Abdurakhman Avtorkhanov said:

What is happening now in Chechen-Ingushetia is, in my opinion, a revolt by the children in revenge for the deaths of their fathers and mothers in the hellish conditions of the deportations in distant, cold and hungry Kazakhstan and Kirgizia. It is a protest by the whole people against the continuing supremacy of the old power structures in Chechen-Ingushetia.¹⁰⁵

Since 1991 the Chechen people have continued to rally around their leaders, even when the leader's popularity among the people was low, in defiance of Russia's attempts to continue its domination. General Dzhokhar Dudayev is an example of a leader with low popularity among the people who was nonetheless supported instead of submitting to Russian domination. Although elected by an overwhelming majority¹⁰⁶ to lead the Chechen drive for independence in 1991, Dudayev's popularity among Chechens dropped drastically as they began to view him as "someone to be ashamed of, a tinpot Walter Mitty whose rantings...made the Chechens seem a nation of criminals."¹⁰⁷

Despite Dudayev's waning popularity, the Chechen people's animosity toward Russia was much greater and would ultimately cause them to rally around Dudayev rather than accept Russian rule. On the eve of Russia's 1994 military invasion, the Chechens were faced with a choice: they could accept Russian domination or they could rally around the unpopular Dudayev. With the subsequent invasion, "Russia

¹⁰⁵ Avtorkhanov quoted in Gall and De Waal, 77.

¹⁰⁶ Lieven, 63

¹⁰⁷ Seely, 293.

had achieved overnight what Dudayev had failed to do since he took power in 1994—unite his small nation of armed, trained fighting men against a common enemy.”

In the most recent conflict (from 1999 to the present) the Chechens have continued to suffer numerous civilian casualties, and some of the Chechen attitudes have become more radical. In October 2002, a group of Chechen “freedom fighters” stormed a theater in Moscow and held several hundred people hostage. During the negotiations, Anna Politkovskaya documented this exchange with Abubakar, the deputy commander of the group responsible for the hostage situation:

Politkovskaya: [referring to the way Abubakar lives in the woods and mountains] Why do you live like that?

Abubakar: I am a fighter for the freedom of my country.

Politkovskaya: What did you come to Moscow for?

Abubakar: To show you what we feel like during mop-up operations, when federals take us hostage, beat us, humiliate, kill. We want you to go through it and understand how you have hurt us.

Politkovskaya: But let the children go.

Abubakar: Children? You take our 12-year-old children away. We are going to keep yours. To make you understand what it feels like.¹⁰⁸

¹⁰⁸ “The ‘Sons’ Rise in Chechnya,” *The Washington Post* (Washington), 3 November 2002. Available at <http://www.amina.com/article/sonsrise.html>. It must be noted that these comments represent only one group among many fighting for Chechen independence. These groups are discussed in more detail in Chapter IV.

As the conflict continues, the Chechens are united in their struggle to gain their freedom from Russian rule. Their strength to continue resisting comes from the past centuries' memories of repression under the Tsarist Empire and the Soviet Union. The Russian government continues to represent its fight in Chechnya as a defensive suppression of international terrorism and protection of the country's territorial integrity. The Chechens maintain that they are continuing their centuries-old struggle for freedom. In addressing the Commission on Security and Cooperation in Europe on 3 November 1999 Lyoma Usmanov, Chechen Representative to the United States, had this to say:

I would ask only that you understand how powerful your example is to us. Over two hundred years ago, in seeking redress for an inconsiderate government's ignorance of American aspirations, your Declaration of Independence boldly proclaimed, We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty, and the pursuit of Happiness. We are looking for life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness.... In this situation, we are forced to defend our families and freedom. As your president, Thomas Jefferson, said, "Resistance to tyrants is obedience to God."¹⁰⁹

¹⁰⁹ Lyoma Usmanov, "Chechen Representative Testifies Before the CSCE," 3 November 1999. Available at http://www.amina.com/article/umanov_csce.html

IV. PROSPECTS FOR CHECHEN INDEPENDENCE AND RUSSIAN NATIONAL INTERESTS

The purpose of this chapter is to examine prospects for Chechen independence and to consider how an independent Chechnya would affect Russian national interests in the region. For Chechnya to gain its independence many obstacles would need to be overcome by Chechens and Russians alike. This chapter addresses the conditions required for Chechen independence and examines the tension between the principles of self-determination and territorial integrity as they apply to the current Russo-Chechen conflict. Solving the conflict would involve striking a balance between Chechnya's desire for self-determination and Russia's intention to protect what it deems its territorial integrity and its security and economic interests in the region.

The current methods of attempting to resolve the conflict (military combat and terrorism) have to date proven to be unsuccessful for both antagonists. The failure to achieve a military solution underscores the need to examine the complex set of requirements and issues that stand as an impediment to reaching a political solution acceptable to both Chechens and Russians.

A. PROSPECTS FOR CHECHEN INDEPENDENCE

Russia and Chechnya, each with its own definition of the present conflict, remain engaged in a battle that shows little hope of any near-term resolution. Both sides continue to seek resolution and/or retribution through the use of violence, and both sides have to date failed to

achieve their objectives. The obstacles to obtaining a political solution to the conflict are numerous and unlikely to be surmounted in the foreseeable future.

For Chechnya to achieve independence, many conditions would have to be met by the Chechens, the Russian government and society, and foreign governments. These conditions include significant support from foreign governments, an erosion (or collapse) of prevailing foreign perceptions of the legitimacy of Russian rule, the development of Chechnya's military power and political cohesion, and the exhaustion of public support in Russia for continuing repressive measures. Furthermore, in gaining support for (or against) Chechen independence, the Chechens and the Russians will need to convince foreign governments to decide between the conflicting principles of territorial integrity and self-determination as they apply to the present conflict in Chechnya.

1. Conditions Required for Chechen Independence

The first of many conditions required for Chechnya to gain independence is significant support from foreign governments for its movement towards independence from Russian rule. Although gaining such support is not completely impossible, the recent use of terrorism as a form of resistance by some groups¹¹⁰ within Chechnya has undermined most of the possibilities for support from foreign governments. The 11 September 2001 terrorist attacks on the United States have allowed President Putin to link his efforts to maintain Russian rule in Chechnya

¹¹⁰ These groups are discussed in more detail later in this chapter.

with the United States-led war on terrorism. As Gail Lapidus points out:

In response to the events of September 11, and out of deference to Russia's participation in the anti-terrorist coalition, the United States, along with several European governments,...expressed greater understanding of the difficult problems Russia faces in the region.... German Chancellor Gerhard Schroeder has suggested that the Chechen conflict should be "re-evaluated."¹¹¹

The United States appears to have followed Chancellor Schroeder's advice. Washington has evidently "re-evaluated" the Russian characterization of the conflict as a struggle against international terrorism. Although the United States has not condemned Chechnya and thrown its total support behind Russia, the use of terrorism by some groups in Chechnya has apparently swayed the United States position in favor of Russia. In stating the United States policy on Chechnya before the Commission on Security and Cooperation in Europe on 9 May 2002, Steven Pifer, Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for European and Eurasian Affairs, said:

We do not ask the Russian Government to try to reach accord with terrorists. But we do believe that there are those with whom discussions can be undertaken, such as Mr. Mashkadov... At the same time, we have called on Mr. Mashkadov and other moderate Chechens to disassociate themselves with terrorists.... A clear demonstration by Mr. Mashkadov that he does not maintain such ties [with terrorist elements in Chechnya] is appropriate as a gesture to show that he is a

¹¹¹ Gail Lapidus, "Putin's War on Terrorism: Lessons From Chechnya," *Post Soviet Affairs* 18 (January-March 2002): 47.

credible interlocutor for the Russians. And we intend to continue to make that point to the Chechens as well.¹¹²

The second condition required for Chechnya to gain independence is an erosion (or collapse) of prevailing foreign perceptions of the legitimacy of Russian rule. The ability of the Chechens to sway the perceptions of foreign governments and cast doubt on the legitimacy of continued Russian domination of Chechnya has been crippled by the terrorist acts of some groups purporting to be fighting for Chechnya's independence.¹¹³ By committing acts of terrorism and allowing the region to become an enclave of lawlessness, these groups are helping to solidify among foreign governments support for the Russian government's position that it has the right to protect the country's territorial integrity.

After a meeting with President Putin on 11 November 2002, NATO Secretary General Lord Robertson expressed this point in reference to Russia's crackdown on Chechen guerrillas: "Russia has a right to deal with breaches of law and order on its own sovereign territory."¹¹⁴ The United States has indicated that it is committed to seeking "a political settlement that will end the fighting, promote

¹¹² Steven Pifer, Statement before the Commission on Security and Cooperation in Europe entitled U.S. Policy on Chechnya (Washington, 9 May 2002), paragraph 9-10. Available at <http://www.state.gov/p/eur/rls/rm/2002/10034pf.htm>.

¹¹³ This in no way suggests that foreign governments have disputed or questioned Russia's right to defend its territorial integrity.

¹¹⁴ Lord Robertson, NATO Secretary General quoted in "Putin Unleashes His Fury Against Chechen Guerillas," *The New York Times International* (New York), 12 November 2002, A10.

reconciliation, and recognize the territorial integrity of the Russian Federation."¹¹⁵

Another obstacle preventing Chechnya from making an effective and winning case for independence is the inability of its leadership to maintain control of the Chechen population and territory. To gain control over the population, Chechen leaders need to possess political cohesion and to develop the Chechen nation's military power. In the absence of cohesive political and military establishments, the leaders in Chechnya have little chance of gaining support from foreign governments for Chechen independence. In general,

a government is entitled to recognition as the government of a state when it may fairly be held to enjoy, with a reasonable prospect of permanency, the obedience of the mass of the population and effective control of much the greater part of the national territory.¹¹⁶

The concepts of political cohesion and military power, although they may seem at first glance to be separate issues, are in fact interdependent. The Mashkadov government's lack of political cohesion explains its inability to control and unify the various armed groups involved in the Chechen resistance. The armed fighters in Chechnya have proven their prowess on the battlefield by successfully engaging the Russian military with guerrilla tactics. However, consolidation and control over that military power constitute a problem for the Chechen leaders.

¹¹⁵ Pifer, paragraph 5.

¹¹⁶ Sir Alec Douglas-Home in the House of Commons, 24 January 1972, col. 967; Quoted in Martin Wight, "International Legitimacy," *International Relations* (May 1972): 28.

To exercise control over its territory the Chechen government needs to develop and control a conventional military force. The various armed forces operating in Chechnya are far from conventional in their organization and orientation. The different groups operating in Chechnya include the following:

- Group One consists of moderate and relatively pro-Western supporters of the Mashkadov government.
- Group Two comprises various armed groups operating independently to achieve specific goals such as protecting their villages and/or avenging the deaths of friends and family members.
- Group Three includes radical elements supported by and "oriented toward the Arab world and promoting the Islamisation of Chechnya."¹¹⁷

The three groups, although fighting for the same cause, are not showing unity of effort to reach the common goal of independence. This discord among the different groups fighting for Chechen independence was noted by Akhmed Zakayev, chief envoy of Chechnya's separatist leader Aslan Maskhadov, during an interview in December 2002:

In Chechnya every day, after every mopping-up operation, autonomous groups that want to take revenge are formed that are not under the control of the general staff of the Chechen armed forces. They are striking independently, as they wish, and they are choosing their own methods of retribution.¹¹⁸

¹¹⁷ Lapidus, 45. See also C. W. Blandy, *Chechnya: The Need to Negotiate* (Camberley, Surrey, England: Conflict Studies Research Center, November 2001), 10-12. Available at <http://www.csrc.ac.uk/pdfs/ob88-cwb.pdf>

¹¹⁸ Akhmed Zakayev quoted in Steven Lee Myers, "Chechen in Extradition Dispute: Criminal or Peacemaker," *The New York Times* (New York), 9 December 2002, A3.

When the radicalized group uses terrorism, it has a two-fold effect. First, with the United States-led war on terrorism underway and most of the world's nations supporting it, Chechnya's armed resistance to Russian rule receives little favorable attention from foreign governments. The second effect is that acts of terrorism convey the impression that the Mashkadov government is not able to effectively control its territory or military forces. According to Colonel-General Yu Demin, Russia's Chief Military Procurator:

Mashkadov himself does not wield power on the entire Republic's territory. The power in the Republic was usurped by various bandits, who call themselves field commanders. They are staging terrorist acts, taking hostages, and making bandit attacks on the territory of neighboring republics which are component parts of the Russian Federation. And according to the Criminal Code of the Chechen Republic of Ichkeria...extremists such as Khattab, Basayev and Rudayev should be outlawed and prosecuted. But nobody is doing that. The terrorists feel at home on the republic's territory and are not only not hiding, but are even declaring jointly with Chechnya's government structures their opposition to federal troops.¹¹⁹

Another condition that is an important factor for Chechnya to obtain independence is a breakdown of Russian public support for the Russian military's continued operations in Chechnya. This point was not important during the Soviet era, because public opinion was then almost irrelevant to the formation of government policy. However,

¹¹⁹ Colonel-General Yu Demin quoted in Steven J. Main, "Counter-Terrorist Operation in Chechnya: On the Legality of the Current Conflict," in Anne Aldis, ed., *The Second Chechen War* (Camberley, Surrey, England: Conflict Studies Research Center, June 2000), 20. Available at <http://www.csrc.ac.uk/pdfs/P31-chap4.pdf>

with the increase in public expressions of opinion since 1991, public opinion has become more important to Russian leaders, and it may affect government decision-making.

In a recent poll conducted by the All-Russia Center for the Study of Public Opinion, "49 percent of respondents said Russian troops are not taking tough enough measures in Chechnya; only 9 percent said the military was acting too harshly."¹²⁰ President Putin's popularity ratings remain high, and this suggests public support for his decision to act decisively in Chechnya.

Although this information suggests a relatively high level of public approval for Russian troops continuing operations in Chechnya, a significant decline in public support within Russia is not beyond the realm of possibility. According to a poll conducted by the Russian Center for Public Opinion and Market Research (VCIOM), respondents believing that the military should continue operations in Chechnya dropped from 70 percent in March 2000 to 46 percent in October 2002. Moreover, those believing that Russia should enter into negotiations rose from 22 percent to 45 percent during the same period.¹²¹ Indeed, a majority of the Russians polled responded to the possible separation of Chechnya from Russia in one of three ways: it has already happened (15 percent), respondent

¹²⁰ Gregory Feifer, "Russia: Putin's Statements On Chechnya May Reflect Public Opinion," (Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty), 13 November 2002). Available at <http://www.rferl.or/nca/features/2002/11/13112002160541.asp>

¹²¹ Polling data from The Russian Center for Public Opinion and Market Research (Moscow) available at http://www.russiavotes.org/Mood_int_tre.htm

would be delighted by separation (25 percent), or it makes no difference (15 percent).¹²²

2. Territorial Integrity vs. Self-determination

Beyond the previously mentioned conditions, resolution of the Russo-Chechen conflict will require foreign governments to decide which principle is supreme: territorial integrity or the right to self-determination. The circumstances of particular cases have historically determined how and when each principle is applicable. In the Russo-Chechen conflict Russia maintains that it is protecting its territorial integrity while Chechnya's position is that it is continuing a centuries-old fight for national self-determination.

United States history offers examples of both principles. The early leaders of the United States, in declaring the country's independence from the King of Great Britain in 1776, said:

When in the Course of human events, it becomes necessary for one people to dissolve the bands which have connected them with another, and to assume among the powers of the earth, the separate and equal station to which the Laws of Nature and of Nature's God entitle them, a decent respect to the opinions of mankind requires that they should declare the causes which impel them to the separation. We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness.—That to secure these rights, Governments are instituted among Men, deriving their just powers from the consent of the governed, --That whenever any Form of Government becomes destructive of

¹²² Ibid.

these ends, it is the Right of the People to alter or to abolish it, and to institute new Government.¹²³

In other words, the United States founders considered their country's self-determination more important than the territorial integrity of the British Empire. Less than a century after winning the battle for its independence, the United States found itself embroiled in a civil war and on the opposite side of the issue. The United States defended its territorial integrity, and fought successfully to prevent the Confederate states from seceding from the Union.

Chechnya's case for self-determination, setting aside its leadership's inability to effectively control its territory and population, appears to be supported by international norms as documented within the United Nations Charter, resolutions, and declarations. In arguing for the supremacy of self-determination over territorial integrity, Ambassador Ashot Mekik-Shakhnazarian, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Armenia, has made the following observation:

The people of a certain state decide on self-determination and fight to that end—for which a movement is often called separatist—and subsequently the people make a spontaneous declaration of what is as yet an unrecognised republic. Frequently at this stage the movement will be described as one of national liberation; once the state is recognised by the world community a new member of the world community comes into being.... [I]t is worth mentioning that the principle of self-determination—unlike that of territorial integrity—is set down in a

¹²³ *The Declaration of Independence*, In Congress, 4 July 1776. Available at http://www.archives.gov/exhibit_hall/charters_of_freedom/declaration/print_friendly.html

huge number of documents, from the UN Charter and to a multiplicity of resolutions and declarations by that organisation on the subject of the granting of independence to colonies and dependencies.... As for the principle of territorial integrity, it should be recognised that no such principle figures in either the Charter or any other basic documents of the UN.¹²⁴

In contrast, Russia argues that it has the right to preserve and protect its territorial integrity. This argument, like Chechnya's argument for self-determination, is well founded in state practice. In international history there have been cases in which the right to self-determination and the right to territorial integrity have both been recognized and precedence has been given to territorial integrity. Galina Starovoitova, a Russian politician and analyst of international affairs, drew attention to the following passages in United Nations General Assembly Resolution 2625, adopted 1970:

[paragraph 5] The establishment of a sovereign and independent State, the free association or integration with an independent State, or the emergence into any other political status freely determined by a people constitute modes of implementing the right of self-determination by that people.

[paragraph 8] Nothing in the foregoing paragraphs shall be construed as authorizing or encouraging any action which would dismember or impair, totally or in part, the territorial integrity or

¹²⁴ Ashot Mekik-Shakhnazarian, Remarks in Anne Aldis, ed., *Shaping an Environment for Peace, Stability & Confidence in the South Caucasus-The Role of International & Regional Security Organizations*, (Camberley, Surrey, England, Conflict Studies Research Center (CSRC), for the Institute for Civil Society and Regional Development (ICSRD), Yerevan, Armenia: July 2002), 85-86. Available at <http://www.csrc.ac.uk/pdfs/P39-ams.pdf>

political unity of sovereign and independent States conducting themselves in compliance with the principle of equal rights and self-determination of peoples as described above and thus possessed of a government representing the whole people belonging to the territory without distinction as to race, creed, or color.¹²⁵

In deciding what position to take regarding the dispute between Chechnya and Russia, foreign governments need to determine which of the two conflicting principles holds supremacy over the other. In doing so, they will be deciding whether the Russian Federation's representation of the conflict holds more international legitimacy than the representation by the Chechens. Martin Wight has suggested that only international society as a whole can determine international legitimacy:

Let us define international legitimacy as the collective judgment of international society about rightful membership of the family of nations; how sovereignty may be transferred; how state succession should be regulated, when large states break up into smaller, or several states combine into one.... We might draw the provisional conclusion that it is only Powers that are too weak to defend themselves whose legitimacy is likely to be called into question.¹²⁶

If past performance is any indication of the future, Russia and Chechnya should not expect foreign governments to take the initiative in deciding which principle

¹²⁵ UN General Assembly Resolution 2625 (XXV), 24 October 1996 cited in Galina Starovoitova, *Sovereignty after Empire: Self-Determination Movements in the Former Soviet Union* (Washington: United States Institute of Peace, November 1997), ch. 2, paragraph 33. Available at http://www.usip.org/pubs/pworks/pwks19/chap2_19.html

¹²⁶ Martin Wight, "International Legitimacy," *International Relations* (May 1972): 1-2.

(territorial integrity or self-determination) has supremacy when applied to the Russo-Chechen conflict. Ashot Khurshudyan, Head of Training Unit, International Centre for Human Development, highlighted other aspects of this complex situation when he stressed

that both principles of territorial integrity and self-determination are of high importance. But before choosing one of these principles it is essential also to look at the other criteria or principles: justice and injustice, fairness and unfairness, and other legal and moral principles, otherwise the process of choosing a principle of territorial integrity or self-determination will be one-sided. While seeking to establish a long lasting peace it is crucial to make sure that all of these principles are balanced and satisfied.¹²⁷

B. RUSSIAN NATIONAL INTERESTS

In an effort to gain international support for their military actions in Chechnya, Russian leaders have argued that they are combating international terrorism and protecting the country's territorial integrity. In a broader context these goals translate to protecting Russian national interests. Russian national interests as they relate to the situation in Chechnya include security of and within the Russian Federation's borders. Russian national interests also involve economic considerations related to Chechnya's geo-strategic location.

1. Security

Russia's security concerns with regard to Chechnya involve promoting peace and stability in the region and preventing it from becoming an enclave for Islamic

¹²⁷ Ashot Khurshudyan, Remarks in Anne Aldis, ed., *Shaping an Environment for Peace, Stability & Confidence in the South Caucasus-The Role of International & Regional Security Organizations*, 109. Available at <http://www.csrc.ac.uk/pdfs/P39-AshotK.pdf>

fundamentalism. The establishment of peace and stability in Chechnya and the rest of the north Caucasus is a goal far off in the future. However, a more achievable near-term goal is to contain the lawlessness and terrorism which have engulfed Chechnya and spread into Russia.

Russia addressed these threats in its national security concept in 1999:

Terrorism in Russia has assumed a multi-planed character and represents a serious threat to the security of the state. An open campaign against Russia to destabilise the situation in the North Caucasus and tear this region away from Russia has been unleashed by international terrorists [there] and has created a direct threat to the territorial integrity of the state.¹²⁸

Although preventing the perpetuation of lawlessness and terrorism in Chechnya is a matter of Russia's internal security, President Putin continues to portray it as part of the greater global fight against international terrorism: "If we do not fight the bandits [in Chechnya], we will have them not only in Moscow, New York and Washington, we will have them in many other countries of the world."¹²⁹

Another issue concerning Russia and its security involves the possibility of an independent Chechnya. The radicalization of some elements of the independence movement in Chechnya raises security concerns among Russian

¹²⁸ "Kontseptsiya natsional'noy bezopasnosti Rossiyskoy Federatsii," 5/10/99. Cited in Steven J. Main, *Russia's Security Dilemmas in the New Century*, ed. Tracey German, *Russia on the Eve of the 21st Century* (Conflict Studies Research Center, Camberley, Surrey, England: February 2000), 14. Available at <http://www.csrc.ac.uk/pdfs/E107-chap3.pdf>

¹²⁹ Russian President Vladimir Putin quoted in Yelena Shishkounova, "Putin surrenders Kaliningrad," Reuters, 12 November 2002. paragraph 17.

leaders. The primary concern is that Chechen independence would lead to the creation of a radical Islamic enclave which would "become a beach-head for further attacks on Russia."¹³⁰ Chechnya's independence would require Russia to relinquish its authority to rule Chechen territory. This is unacceptable to Russians who accept the argument advanced in 1999 by Vladimir Putin, then Prime Minister: "the terrorists will not stop at that. They will create an extremist state that will continue to attack us."¹³¹ A further implication of the lawlessness and instability in the region is that they are detrimental to economic security.

2. Geo-Strategic Location of Chechnya and Economic Concerns

Continued instability in Chechnya could have disastrous affects on Russian economic interests in the region. First, continued conflict and instability in Chechnya prevent the influx of foreign investment needed to develop and maintain the infrastructure required to exploit the natural resources of the region. Conflict in a given region repels investors because of the high risk of losing their investments due to corruption and lawlessness. The risks associated with Chechnya have been high, as Anatol Lieven points out:

The presence of Chechnya across the existing [oil] pipeline route from Baku to the Black Sea has obviously been an impediment to Russian hopes. Under Dudayev, the pipeline was riddled

¹³⁰ Russian President Vladimir Putin, *First Person: An Astonishingly Frank Self-Portrait*, trans. Catherine A. Fitzpatrick (New York: PublicAffairs, Perseus Books Group, 2000), 142.

¹³¹ Russian Prime Minister Vladimir Putin, interview to ORT Channel, 1 November 1999. Available at <http://www.magma.ca/~rusemb/Chechnya.htm>

with holes by local people siphoning off the oil.... The war, of course, wrecked it still further.¹³²

Chechen independence would also have detrimental financial implications for Russia because of Chechnya's geo-strategic location, "not that Chechnya is important in itself, but that it lies on routes to much more important places."¹³³ The utility of maintaining Chechnya as a part of the Russian Federation resides in the transportation of oil extracted from the Caspian Sea basin through Chechnya via existing pipelines and prospective additional pipelines. Anatol Lieven gives a further illustration of how Chechen independence would affect Russian interests:

Today, the issue also remains lines of communication; with Chechnya fully independent, the geographical connections of Daghestan to the Russian Federation would become thoroughly eccentric. But even more important of course is the fate of the oil pipeline from Azerbaijan through Chechnya north to the Russian Port of Novorossiisk, the rival to which is the plan for a new pipeline through Georgia to Turkey. The chief protagonists are the same as they were 150 years ago: Russia and Turkey... And seen from Moscow, the ultimate issue is the same: hegemony over the Caucasus.¹³⁴

Resolving the conflict in Chechnya is a complex task that will require a large amount of effort and cooperation from Chechnya, Russia, and foreign governments. The conditions required for Chechen independence are numerous and complex. The only certain conclusion at this point in

¹³² Anatol Lieven, *Chechnya: Tombstone of Russian Power* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1998), 85.

¹³³ Ibid., 85.

¹³⁴ Ibid., 314.

the conflict is that the current approach of using force to solve the dispute is not working for either Russia or Chechnya. The Russian claims that the conflict is "an internal problem to be solved between the Chechen people and the Russian Federation"¹³⁵ are clearly not persuasive to human rights monitors and some other foreign observers, and at least some foreign governments may try to promote a political solution to the conflict.

Legitimacy is derived from the collective opinions of foreign governments. However, as Martin Wight points out:

Rules of legitimacy are necessarily very general, and are elastic in proportion to their generality. They can be applied to fit many different and even contradictory circumstances. Moreover, like all political principles, they are guides not masters. There are occasions when it is prudent to subordinate them to overriding interests.... The most pronounced negative criterion of international legitimacy at the present time is the principle that conditions brought about by military force or other means of coercion should not be recognized. This derives from the League Covenant, the Briand-Kellogg Pact and the UN Charter.¹³⁶

The tension between self-determination and territorial integrity continues. Foreign governments are unlikely, in the near-term, to decide which antagonist in this conflict has superior legitimate rights: self-determination in the case of the Chechens or territorial integrity in the case of the Russians. In the interim it seems that an enduring

¹³⁵ Russian President Valdimir Putin quoted in "Putin Insists Chechnya is Russia Issue," *The Moscow Times* (Moscow), 13 November 2002. Page 3.

¹³⁶ Wight, 28.

resolution to the conflict would require significant compromises to address the needs of both parties.

V. CONCLUSIONS

There is no short-term solution to the conflict over Chechen aspirations to self-determination and independence. Solving the conflict would require bold measures on both sides to begin breaking down the barriers of mistrust that have been created over the past centuries, and thereby promote an environment of cooperation.

To accomplish these ends each side would have to acknowledge the other's perspective on the history of the conflict. Moreover, both sides would have to respect accepted international norms, and be prepared to make concessions. The antagonists do not yet appear ready, however, to recognize that armed conflict and terrorism have driven them into a quagmire, and that both sides would have much to gain by working peacefully toward a political solution.

The first step in solving the conflict may be for each side to acknowledge the other's historical perspective. Russians must understand how centuries of Russian brutality and domination have led the Chechens to mistrust them. The dissolution of the Soviet Union rekindled independence aspirations in Chechnya.

Chechens must also recognize that their use of terrorist tactics during their struggle for independence has provoked mistrust and disdain among Russians and therefore has become an impediment to Chechnya's quest for independence. In 1999, professing to fear further collapse of the government's authority, President Putin declared

that he needed to act in Chechnya. In describing the situation after the violence in Dagestan he said:

I realized we needed to strike rebel bases in Chechnya.... We would very soon be on the verge of collapse.... This is what I thought of the situation in August [1999], when the bandits attacked Dagestan: If we don't put an immediate end to this, Russia will cease to exist. It was a question of preventing the collapse of the country.¹³⁷

Although both sides have understandable reasons for looking to history to justify their continued struggle, it is important to address the historical basis of their ills without becoming consumed by them. In the words of Dwight D. Eisenhower, "Neither a wise man nor a brave man lies down on the tracks of history to wait for the train of the future to run over him."¹³⁸

The second requirement in moving toward a political solution is for both antagonists to adhere to generally accepted international norms and to discard unacceptable practices (terrorism and the indiscriminate use of force against civilian populations). Manvel Sargsyan, political advisor to the President of Nagorno-Karabakh, explains the risks associated with failure to act within international norms:

The priority of the values of democratic development in the approach to regional entities must *per se* force these regional entities to speak in the language of international norms. Any regional entity which deviates from the norms

¹³⁷ Russian President Vladimir Putin, *First Person: An Astonishingly Frank Self Portrait*, trans. Catherine A. Fitzpatrick (New York: PublicAffairs, Perseus Books Group, 2000), 139-140.

¹³⁸ Dwight D. Eisenhower in a Presidential campaign speech in *Time*, 6 October 1952. Available from Lexis-Nexis [References: Quotes].

indicated will quite simply find itself outside the frame of international encouragement.¹³⁹

In this regard, Chechnya's priorities are clear. The necessity to cut all ties with terrorist elements operating in Chechnya or elsewhere is paramount. The use of terrorism only serves to bolster the legitimacy of Moscow's assertion of control over Chechnya in the eyes of foreign governments.

For Russia, adherence to international norms would mean that it would have to exercise restraint and focus its efforts exclusively upon the terrorist elements. Russia's ability to effectively regain control of the region, stop the armed conflict, and achieve a political solution depends on bolstering the legitimacy of its rule among Russians, Chechens, and foreign governments. In justifying their actions in the current conflict, the Russians have gone to considerable lengths to present a persuasive case regarding the legality of their operations in Chechnya. The exercise has been intended to persuade foreign governments and observers within Russia that Moscow was doing "the right thing" and that it was engaged in a "good" war.¹⁴⁰

¹³⁹ Manvel Sargsyan, Remarks in Anne Aldis, ed., *Shaping an Environment for Peace, Stability & Confidence in the South Caucasus-The Role of International & Regional Security Organizations*, (Camberley, Surrey, England: Conflict Studies Research Center, for the Institute for Civil Society and Regional Development (ICSRD), Yerevan, Armenia, July 2002), 88. Available at <http://www.csrc.ac.uk/pdfs/P39-ms.pdf>

¹⁴⁰ Dr Steven J. Main wrote an extensive paper for the Conflict Studies Research Center describing the legal justification for Russia's campaign in Chechnya. However, he points out that the main reason for Russia's extensive efforts to justify its actions was to assure the public it was in the moral right as well as in the legal right. Steven J. Main, "Counter-Terrorist Operation in Chechnya: On the Legality of the Current Conflict," in Anne Aldis, ed., *The Second Chechen War* (Camberley, Surrey, England: Conflict Studies Research Center, June 2000), 28. Available at <http://www.csrc.ac.uk/pdfs/P31-chap4.pdf>

Regardless of whether Russia is successful in convincing foreign and domestic observers that it is engaged in a just conflict in Chechnya, Russian leaders must determine if the cost of the conflict is worth the effort required to continue the campaign. Regarding this dilemma as it applies to the current conflict, Jakub Swiecicki, a senior analyst at the Swedish Institute of International Affairs, has this judgement:

It isn't possible to be a victor in such a war. But Putin seems not to understand that. It exactly fits a comparison with France and Algeria in the middle of the last century. Almost no Frenchmen could imagine an independent Algeria. But after several years, [then-French President Charles] de Gaulle realized that the war harmed France much more than anything else.¹⁴¹

Any political solution would require considerable concessions from both the Russians and the Chechens. This might require Chechnya to accept a less ambitious form of self-determination, at least on a temporary and provisional basis until confidence between Russia and Chechnya can be established. This interim measure would require a large amount of trust from the Chechens while Russian troops, in cooperation with the Chechens, continued a campaign focused on rooting out terrorist elements in Chechnya. Following the elimination of terrorist elements and the restoration of reasonable stability, Russian troops would need to remain temporarily until Chechnya could develop its own

¹⁴¹ Jakub Swiecicki quoted in Valentinas Mite, "Russia: Putin Vows Harsher Measures in Chechnya - But Can He Win?," (Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty), 1 November 2002; addition in the original. Available at <http://www.rferl.org/nca/features/2002/11/01112002170718.asp>

military and police forces under the control of an elected government.

A period of relative peace and stability would allow the Chechens the time and security environment required to consolidate the local authorities, with the political cohesion to control their own police and military forces and provide security as well as law and order for the people.

Clearly, any political solution that would end in Chechen independence would also require addressing the Russian security and economic concerns discussed in this thesis.

The prospects for solving the conflict between Russia and Chechnya over Chechen aspirations for independence and self-determination without further violence appear remote at present, but the possibility still remains. Overcoming the mutual mistrust and contempt that have developed during centuries of conflict and reprisal would be difficult. However, overcoming this deep-rooted antagonism is essential to resolving the conflict without more bloodshed and damage to both Russia and Chechnya.

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